

Voting Rights Advancement Act. It is a commonsense proposal to reinstate the preclearance provisions of the Voting Rights Act which were wrongfully struck down by a conservative Supreme Court and which have a long history of bipartisan support in the Senate.

I want to thank my colleague Senator LEAHY, who spoke earlier today, and Chairman DURBIN and all of my other Democratic colleagues who had a hand in drafting this proposal, and a special thanks to our colleague, the Senator from Alaska, who announced yesterday that she will vote in favor of opening debate on the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. I know it was not a decision she made lightly—she called me from Alaska and let me know—but my Democratic colleagues worked hard with her to compromise on a proposal that she could support while still maintaining the basic thrust of their legislation.

Now, just as Democrats in the Senate worked with Senator MURKOWSKI on legislation to strengthen our democracy, we will work with other Republicans in good faith to improve this legislation, but they must come to the table first. I want to emphasize once again what today's vote is about. We are not asking any Republican to support specific legislation. Today is about whether or not we will vote to begin debate here in this Chamber.

Again, the preclearance provisions that are being updated in today's bill have long been supported by both sides of the aisle repeatedly. The Voting Rights Act, which originally instituted them, has been updated five times in the last half century, under both Republican and Democratic Presidents, and with votes from both sides. This has always been a bipartisan issue in the past; it should be no different today.

I commit to my Republican colleagues that we will have a full-fledged debate process here on the floor, where our colleagues can offer germane amendments and voice what concerns they may have.

Now, I hope more Members on the other side of the aisle will follow Senator MURKOWSKI's example. Senate Republicans shouldn't be afraid of merely starting debate on an issue we have long debated and long supported in the past. Merely crossing arms and squelching any opportunity for progress is unacceptable. If Republicans have different ideas on how to achieve a stronger democracy, they owe it to the American people to come forward and debate their ideas. I hope they do the right thing and vote for cloture to move forward on this discussion later today.

NOMINATION OF DILAWAR SYED

Mr. President, finally, Mr. Syed. For every executive branch nominee who grabs headlines, there are many, many more who escape the spotlight while still playing an essential role in our government. Almost always, these

nominees proceed through this Chamber with bipartisan support, but, today, a handful of extreme Republican Senators are needlessly and callously stonewalling many of President Biden's uncontroversial nominees. The case of Dilawar Syed—nominated to be second in charge at the SBA—stands out as being particularly, particularly egregious.

He is an American success story. He came to this country from Pakistan decades ago and became a successful entrepreneur, small business owner, and coalition builder. His nomination is backed by more than 200 civic, government, higher education, and business groups and leaders, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce—hardly a mouthpiece for the Biden administration. Upon his confirmation, Mr. Syed would be the highest ranking Muslim in government, the highest ranking Muslim for Senate confirmation.

But, for reasons that confound common sense, a handful of Republicans on the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee are not just blocking Mr. Syed's vote; they are refusing to meet in order to allow his nomination to proceed. They are just not even meeting, and that holds his nomination up. I haven't heard of that happening in a very long time.

To date, what is so confounding is that these Republicans who are holding Mr. Syed up have failed to offer a clear reason why they oppose him. Each time they try to come up with an explanation, whether it is cheap ad hominem attacks or partisan tie-ins to the culture wars, their arguments fall flat and are easily refuted.

Why are these handful of Republicans opposing this nomination?

Although Republicans have boycotted his markup several times, they will have a chance to give this man his vote tomorrow. Chairman CARDIN has worked with Republicans to try to get them to show up to tomorrow's markup. I commend Chairman CARDIN's effort.

Today, I ask: Will any Republicans have the decency to show up tomorrow to his markup and give Mr. Syed a vote?

If they want to oppose him, they are free to go on record and explain why, but boycotting his markup, resorting to cheap and offensive attacks, and needlessly blocking a qualified public servant is a shameful, shameful course to take.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

REMEMBERING JEAN ROUNDS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday, we learned of the tragic passing

of a much loved member of the Senate family.

Jean Rounds was an impressive and active public servant who served the people of South Dakota in many ways, including as their first lady; who served a large and tight-knit family as mother and grandmother; and who, for our colleague, Senator MIKE ROUNDS, was, quite simply, the center of his world.

The life MIKE and Jean built together was a partnership founded on faith, service, and love. By all accounts, Jean's bravery, MIKE's devotion, and the loving care of their family in the face of a terrible illness made their inspiring example shine even brighter.

So the Senate is united in our grief. We will continue to hold our friend MIKE and the entire Rounds family close in our thoughts and prayers in the difficult days that lie ahead.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. President, on a totally different matter, last night was a difficult evening for Democrats. The Democratic Party has wildly misread their mandate and let the radical left run the country. Local Democrats let teachers unions keep schools shut months longer than necessary and told parents they didn't get a say in what their kids were learning. Washington Democrats have supercharged inflation, recreated welfare without work requirements, and made America significantly less energy independent.

President Biden was only given a 50-50 Senate and a tiny majority in the House, but he decided to let the radical left run the country. Citizens wanted a return to normalcy but have gotten a never-ending series of government-created crises.

So, look, the American people will not stand for this. That is what voters told Democrats last night all across the country. The results from different parts of our country demonstrate that this was, in large part, a referendum on national issues. But it is not too late. Democrats should listen to the voters, drop this reckless taxing-and-spending spree, and stop trying to ram through a socialist transformation that the American people never asked for.

The radical transformation that Democrats are writing behind closed doors would compound every mistake their party has made. Look at virtually any part of American families' lives, and Democrats' reckless taxing-and-spending spree would seize control of it and yank it way to the left.

The same Democrats who don't want parents involved in schools want to take over daycare and pre-K, crowd out faith-based and family providers, and put this vast new system under the control of the culture warrior HHS Secretary, who sued the Little Sisters of the Poor.

The same Democrats who pretend to defend working families are dead set on a massive tax cut that would overwhelmingly benefit rich people in blue States. One of the biggest pieces of